

Dear Committee Members:

As you know, United Illuminating plans to remove all trees and tree branches extending eight feet from either side of overhead electrical lines from ground to sky, including trees on private property. This plan will go before the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) on Thursday night March 6 at 6:30 pm in the auditorium the Hamden Middle school at 2623 Dixwell Avenue.

Therefore, I write concerning House Bill 5408 on tree trimming.

Utility companies must be required to obtain written consent from property owners for removal of trees on private property.

It is my understanding that United Illuminating had the state statute on tree cutting quietly rewritten last year. This included the section on tree cutting on private property, but no one seemed to be aware of what was going on.

Before the spring of 2013, state statute required that the utility companies had to notify a property owner by certified letter, if they wanted to cut down a tree on private property. If the property owner did not reply within ten days, it meant the property owner did **not give "consent"**. And the tree could **not** be cut down!

Under the changes made in the state statute last year, if UI or another utility company wants to cut down a tree on private property, the utility company notifies the property owner by ringing the door bell or leaving a door hanger. (In two meetings held in Hamden on January 13th and 15th, UI explained it would no longer send certified letters to property owners, but ring door bells and leave door hangers.) **If the property owner does not respond within ten days, it means the property owner has given "consent"**. And UI can cut down the tree at will on private property! This new definition of "consent" makes no allowance for a property owner on vacation, away on business, out of the country, in the hospital, etc. So, when a property owner returns home, he or she will find their tree or trees cut down. This can not be allowed to happen. **Utility companies must be required to obtain written consent from property owners for removal of trees on private property.**

Therefore, I request that this issue (utility companies must be required to obtain written consent from property owners for removal of trees on private property) be addressed in Bill 5408.

Thank you for your consideration on this issue.

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